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## Georgia State Legislative Update: End of Session 2022

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## Georgia State Legislative Update: End of Session 2022

This was an especially busy year for library- and education-related bills in the state legislature. This roundup will let you know what passed and where to read the new laws. This review is meant for informational purposes only, and its contents should not be construed to constitute legal advice. Please note that this information is current as of April 7, 2022, and it does not take into account any actions taken by the governor in the 40 days postsession.

### **SB 226: School Materials Challenges, “Harmful to Minors”**

[SB 226](#) was passed by the legislature on March 30, 2022 and sent to Governor Kemp for his signature. This bill sets a definition of the term “harmful to minors” as it relates to both instructional and library materials within schools. It calls for each local board of education to create a complaint resolution policy by January 1, 2023, that complies with a new state-based standard that:

- Starts with principals receiving written complaints from parent or guardian of enrolled student,
- Requires the principal or their designee reviewing complaint and determining whether the material is harmful to minors within seven business days and relaying this decision to the complainant within 10 business days,
- Establishes an appeal to the local school board that says the appeal must be heard and determined within 30 calendar days, and
- Includes a list of challenged materials on the school board’s website available for public review for at least 12 months as well as the ability for parents or guardians to review challenged physical materials in the media center.

The Georgia Library Association (GLA) and its partner organizations were strongly opposed to this legislation.

### **HB 910: FY22 Amended Budget**

All state employees received a \$5,000 cost of living adjustment that was made retroactive to July 1, 2021. This applies to all current state employees, and it will affect the salaries of library workers inside the University System of Georgia (USG), the Georgia Public Library Service, and other state-employed library workers. This pay increase is expected to become active in most places in April 2022.

### **HB 911: FY23 Budget**

[HB 911](#) is the FY23 (July 2022–June 2023) budget for the state of Georgia. This budget contains good news for Georgia’s public libraries. Within section 41.14, public libraries received a per capita increase in their state provided materials grant (for the purchase of materials) from \$0.40 to \$0.60 per capita, a total funding of \$2,214,123. Cost of living adjustments to make permanent the \$5,000 raise for all state reimbursed positions (including library workers inside USG and state reimbursed public library positions) were also included.

In addition to the state funding, Bonds 17 and 23–29 were appropriated for the construction and renovation of library facilities. This includes:

- Bond 17: \$2,000,000 for major repair and renovation of Georgia’s public libraries
- Bond 23: \$900,000 to renovate and expand the Southside Library of the South Georgia Regional Library System in Valdosta.

- Bond 24: \$950,00 to renovate the Mary Vinson Memorial Library of the Middle Georgia Regional Library System in Milledgeville.
- Bond 25: \$2,000,000 to construct an addition onto the Richmond Hill Library of the Statesboro Regional System in Richmond Hill.
- Bond 26: \$900,000 to renovate the Oconee County Library of the Athens Regional System in Watkinsville.
- Bond 27: \$1,400,000 to renovate and expand the Riverdale branch of the Clayton County Library System in Riverdale.
- Bond 28: \$900,000 to renovate the McDonough Public Library of the Henry County Library System in McDonough.
- Bond 29: \$2,000,000 to construct the East Side Branch Library of the Athens Regional Library System in Athens.
- [HB 1084](#): The so-called “divisive concepts” bill that precludes a defined set of race-based concepts from being taught in K–12 environments to either students or employees.
- [HB 1178](#): The “Parents’ Bill of Rights” that allows for parents or guardians to review all records and instructional materials that pertain to their enrolled student.

### What Happens Now

Pursuant to Georgia law, the governor has six consecutive days to sign or veto legislature if the legislature is in session. Once the legislative session ends, the governor has 40 days to determine whether to sign or veto legislation (this year, May 14<sup>th</sup>). Any legislation not acted on during the 40-day period automatically becomes law.

All laws in the state of Georgia become enacted on July 1<sup>st</sup> (the start of the fiscal year) unless otherwise specified in the text of the legislation.

If you have any questions about these actions or want to know how they will affect your library, you are encouraged to reach out to your legal counsel.

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These funds provide much needed support for Georgia’s public libraries throughout the state as they endeavor to better the lives of all residents.

### Related Bills

Although not directly related to libraries, these other bills related to education also passed the legislature and were sent to the governor for potential enactment:

- [HB 1](#): Public colleges and universities are restricted from creating “free speech zones” on their campuses.